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CITRUS HEALTH DEPARTMENT URGES CAUTION AFTER STORMS AND FLOODS

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As low-lying and flood-prone areas of Citrus County continue to deal with flooding due to recent heavy rains, the Florida Department of Health in Citrus County (DOH-Citrus) is reminding residents to take precautions to keep families and neighbors safe.

Pooling Flood Water

Heavy rain causes flood waters to pool on streets and throughout neighborhoods. In these situations, be aware of the following:

- Road surfaces become obscured, and drivers can unknowingly steer into a deep body of water, such as a canal or pond.
- Electricity from streetlights and power poles may be conducted through standing water, causing a deadly shock to anyone coming in contact with it.
- Children playing in contaminated standing water can become sick or be bitten by snakes or floating insects.
- People coming into contact with floodwater should thoroughly rinse any exposed body parts with soap and clean water.



Sewage and Septic Systems

During or after a storm, residents may experience difficulties with their sewage systems not functioning properly. If residents have a septic system that operates by a dosing pump, it will not function without electricity. Residents should refrain from using water in their homes until electricity is restored. Without the pump working, the septic tank will fill and may cause backup of sewage in the home.

What should I do if sewage backs up into my home?

- If a sewage backup has occurred in your home, stay out of affected areas and keep children away. If your entire home has been saturated, evacuate the home until all affected areas, including but not limited to carpets, rugs, drywall, and baseboards, have been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.
- If sewage has overflowed in open areas or streets, etc., avoid these areas and especially do not let children play in these areas.
- If you are having problems in areas served by public sewer systems, please contact your utility company to insure they are aware of problems in your area.

How to clean up sewage contaminated items and sewage spills inside your home:

- Wear protective clothing such as rubber boots and waterproof gloves.

- Clean walls, hard-surfaced floors, and other household surfaces with soap and water and disinfect with a solution of 1/4 cup of bleach in one gallon of water. Once cleanup is complete, dry out affected items to prevent the growth of mold.
- Do not mix ammonia cleansers with bleach as toxic vapors will form.
- Wash all linens and clothing in hot water or dry clean them.
- Discard Items that cannot be washed or dry cleaned, such as mattresses, carpeting, wall coverings and upholstered furniture.

Contaminated Water Supply

Drinking contaminated water may cause illness. Listen to local announcements on safety of the water supply.

If your public water system lost pressure, a boil water notice will likely be issued for your area. People in these areas should take precautions to avoid contaminated water, especially individuals with private wells. If your well is in a flooded area, your water may contain disease-causing organisms and may not be safe to drink.

DOH-Citrus recommends one of the following:

- * Boil the water before drinking, holding it at a rolling boil for one minute.
- * Disinfect it by adding 8 drops (about 1/8 tsp – this would form a puddle about the size of a dime) of unscented household bleach per gallon of water and then let it stand for 30 minutes. If the water is cloudy after 30 minutes, repeat the procedure.
- * Use only bottled water for mixing baby formula.

Contaminated Food

Do not eat any food that may have come into contact with flood water. Discard any food without a waterproof container if there is any chance that it has come into contact with floodwater. Undamaged, commercially canned foods can be saved if you remove the labels thoroughly, wash the cans, and then disinfect them with a solution consisting of 1/4 cup of bleach per gallon of water for clean surfaces. Re-label your cans, including the expiration date, with a marker. Food containers with screw-caps, snap lids, and home canned foods should be discarded if they have come in contact with flood water because they cannot be disinfected.

Contaminated Items

Discard wooden cutting boards, plastic utensils, baby bottle nipples and pacifiers. There is no way to safely clean them if they have come in contact with contaminated flood waters. Thoroughly wash metal pans, ceramic dishes, and utensils with soap and hot water and sanitize by boiling them in clean water or by immersing them for 15 minutes in a solution of 1/4 cup of household bleach per gallon of water.

Hygiene

Basic hygiene is very important when dealing with flood waters.

- Keep hands and fingers away from the nose, mouth, eyes and ears.
- Wash hands with soap and water immediately after cleanup efforts as well as before eating or drinking.
- Keep fingernails short and clean. Use a stiff brush to remove dirt and foreign materials.
- Do not store fresh work clothes with used work clothes.
- Shower as soon as possible after cleaning up sewage or sewage contaminated flood waters.

For more information about DOH-Citrus, visit www.CitrusCountyHealth.org or follow us on Twitter at [@FLHealthCitrus](https://twitter.com/FLHealthCitrus).

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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